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TODAY'S FREE SHOWS AT THE FEST

Noon Dixieland Brébeuf (General Motors Stage): student band
1 p.m. Manouche (Terrasse Amarula)
1:30 p.m. Activities for kids (Alcan Stage)
2 p.m. Marsh Dondurma! (Best Buy - CBC Stage)
3 p.m. Stage Band Montcalm (General Motors Stage): student band
4 p.m. Denny's Dixieland Clan (Alcan Stage)
4:45 p.m. Le Dixieband (Best Buy - CBC Stage)
5:15 p.m. Le parade de la Louisiane
6 p.m. No Name Jazz Sextet (General Motors Stage): Local hard-boppers are praised for their energy.
6 p.m. Le Dixieband (Best Buy - CBC Stage)
6:30 p.m. Juan Carmona (Carrefour General Motors): French flamenco purist of gypsy descent.
7 p.m. Denny's Dixieland Clan (Terrasse Amarula)
7 p.m. Smokinsonic with special guest Antoine Gratton (Loto-Québec Stage): Rootsy, groovy Quebec blues.
7 p.m. Christine Jensen Quartet (Club Jazz TD Canada Trust): Canadian saxophonist returns from Paris sojourn with Look Left album.
7:30 p.m. Sambasunda (Bell Stage): Seventeen-piece Javanese band brings intoxicating Indonesian music.
8 p.m. Johanne Desforges (Alcan Stage): Montreal singer makes 10th jazz fest appearance.
8 p.m. Spam Allstars (Samsung Stage): Montreal's Andrew Yeomanson - DJ Le Spam - brings electrofunk.
8 p.m. Mimi Fox (MMMS tent)
9 p.m. Ryan Shaw (General Motors Stage): Soul/R&B/gospel singer has been at it since age 3.
9 p.m. Burnside Style (Loto-Québec Stage): The sons of R.L. Burnside keep his hoodoo alive.
9 p.m. Esperanza Spalding (Best Buy - CBC Stage): Jazz world fell hard for this young acoustic bassist.
9 p.m. Lionel Loueke (Carrefour General Motors): Beninese jazz guitarist plays with creativity and radiant soul. A musical healer.
10 p.m. Johanne Desforges (Alcan Stage): See 8 p.m.
10 p.m. Spam Allstars (Samsung Stage): See 8 p.m.
10 p.m. DJ Dolores & Aparelhagem (Bell Stage)
10 p.m. Christine Jensen Quartet (Club Jazz TD Canada Trust): See 7 p.m.
11 p.m. Esperanza Spalding (Best Buy - CBC Stage): See 9 p.m.
11 p.m. Ryan Shaw (General Motors Stage): See 9 p.m.
11 p.m. Burnside Style (Loto-Québec Stage): See 9 p.m.

TODAY'S PICKS

9 p.m. Lionel Loueke (Carrefour General Motors): The Beninese guitarist (recently signed by Verve) plays with a radiance and fluidity that may defy categorization – other than "lovely."

9 p.m. Burnside Style (Loto-Québec Stage): The sons of the late R.L. Burnside keep dad's raw blues alive, with shots from A Ass Pocket of Whisky.

MARK LEPAGE

DISC OF THE DAY

Bryan Lee

Katrina Was Her Name
Justin Time

Guitarist Bryan Lee gets serious on the raw, haunting title track about the hurricane that destroyed his hometown, New Orleans. Otherwise, though, this latest entry in the six-string therapist's estimable catalogue mostly features the kind of upbeat sounds that give the blues a good name. The driving 1950s R&B of Doc Pomus and Joe Koskosky's My Baby Done Left Me and Clark Wills's comic hard-luck saga Flat Foot Sam are but two examples. Even when Lee's doing a lowdown number or easing into a ballad, he sounds joyful. The scope of material here also ensures that the disc never gets dull – which might have something to do with producer Duke Robillard, whose magic touch included bringing in some simple but perfect horns.

Bryan Lee performs two free shows tomorrow night at 9 and 11 on the Loto-Québec stage.

BERNARD PERUSSE

JAZZED UP BANJO

SCOTT ROBERT COLLINS THE GAZETTE

BEYOND BLUEGRASS Banjo maestro Béla Fleck, who turns 49 on Tuesday, leads his genre-defying Fleck-tones through a set at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier of Place des Arts last night. Along with bassist Victor Wooten, the group includes Jeff Coffin on sax and Roy Wooten on percussion. If you're chasing, Fleck plays the Ottawa Blues Festival today, and the Winnipeg Folk Festival tomorrow.

NOTES FROM THE FEST

They Shanghaied the music, sort of

Wednesday

Vibraphonist **Jean Vanasse** hooked up with trio mates **Sylvain Provost** on guitar and **Frédéric Grenier** on bass at the Gesù for a couple of improvs. Then the fun began. Out came Montreal singer **Coco Zhao** and violinist **Peng Fei** for an excursion into the moody music of Shanghai in the 1920s and '30s. We heard some of this at last year's fest, but it was still worth checking out, if only because Coco is a fascinating character, with an androgynous appearance and a pretty unique way of combining Chinese folk form and jazz expression. Maybe when China rules the world, this is what jazz will sound like.

PETER HADEKEL

Then, it was over to Club Soda to check out **Mark Murphy**, a legendary bebop singer who's into his sixth decade as a jazzer. Time has not been entirely kind to Murphy's intonation and pitch, but he remains one of a kind, a completely original stylist in the realm of jazz vocalists. He sang his classic lyrics to Freddie Hubbard's Red Clay and Oliver Nelson's Stolen Moments, and fashioned a wonderful medley of Skylark and You Don't Know What Love Is. He can still seat a line with the best of them, and as a performer, he's charmingly spontaneous and unpredictable.

PETER HADEKEL

A lot of the talk was about **Bob Dylan's** sold-out show at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier of Place des Arts, but it would be a shame for **Jimmie Vaughan's** excellent 50-minute opening set to get lost in the shuffle. The guitarist – accompanied by bassist **Pat Whitefield**, drummer **George Rains** and second guitarist **Billy Pitman** – gave his all in a concert-hall atmosphere and opening slot that were not necessarily hospitable to his brand of six-beer blues. Vaughan, who plays with a clean, lyrical polish that's stylistically very different from his brother Stevie Ray, established his authority early in the game during a version of Texas Flood. As he eased into a solo by bending the notes, he busted a string, drawing a round of applause. Without missing a beat, he simply completed the lengthy solo on five strings. Vaughan did everything from barrelhouse boogie and slow blues to Tex-Mex rock 'n' roll – with the wonderful **Lou Ann Barton** assisting on vocal chores. You don't get openers like that very often.

BERNARD PERUSSE

Speaking of Dylan, the jazz festival's attempts to make an event of bestowing its second Spirit award on him met with failure. Dylan had agreed to accept the award, which went to Paul Simon last year, but imposed a condition: He would accept it backstage after the show, and no press representatives could attend. By the time the concert was over, however, Dylan's tour bus was waiting and he wanted to get a jump-start on the drive to Ottawa, where he was playing the Bluesfest last night. At that point, the jazz fest people were asked to just put the award in the mail. They'll also have to forward some gifts from Montreal fans – although Dylan would not accept any while he was here, in accordance with his long-standing policy.

BERNARD PERUSSE

A sense of adventure permeated the set by **Kieran Hebden** and **Steve Reid** at Metropolis, opening for **Tortoise.** The 29-year-old Hebden leaned over a console of machinery controlling an array of bleeps, beeps and bassy beats, over which his 63-year-old comrade pounded up a storm on his very spare drum kit. The pair produced enthralling, entrancing grooves with limited means. Though following Hebden's lead, Reid was the standout – his ever-changing rhythms teemed with life. The energy level dropped when the headliner took the stage. The veteran Chicago post-rock act sounded proficient, but after the playful dynamism of the openers, Tortoise also sounded tame.

T'CHA DUNLEVY

When you play a duet with **Han Bennink,** 65 years young and avant-jazz master clown drummer, you accept to follow (unless you are his Instant Composers Pool Orchestra co-founder Misha Mengelberg). So pianist **Anthony Coleman** had his hands full injecting some well-tempered Schoenbergian phrases or modal riffs into the set at Cabaret Juste pour rire. Bennink's churlish attempts at laughs are wearing as thin as Jerry Lewis's, attacking his larger-than-usual drumkit or beating a box (and kicking it into the audience) or tipping the floor with his sticks. Then again, that's Dada.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

There was plenty of pre-show buzz about **Kurt Rosenwinkel's** festival appearance, and rightly so. The guitarist has stalked out his ground on several compelling Verve releases. But through the first 45-minute set at the Spectrum, there was something missing. Maybe it was the fact that saxophonist **Mark Turner** never really cut loose the way he can. Maybe it was the sometimes ponderous quality of Rosenwinkel's music, which can get stuck in a medium groove. Still, the guitarist's own solos were things of beauty, with a tone and a harmonic concept all his own.

PETER HADEKEL

John Abercrombie always distinguished himself from the fusion-inspired guitarists of the 1970s with his subtle touch and delicate tone, and those qualities remained his trademark at the Gesù in a quartet with violinist **Mark Feldman,** bassist **Marc Johnson** and drummer **Joey Baron.** Despite some speaker problems on stage that clearly bothered Abercrombie (who made light of it by making fun of his complaining), the musical proceedings had the open air of a leisurely drive in the countryside. Whether on his own abstract compositions, or a version of Ornette Coleman's Round Trip, the guitarist's sorties were nimble and glowing without calling attention to his technique. Feldman, an amazing technician who can turn on a dime, tended to overplay; some of his responses to the guitarist's quietly methodical explorations were sweet and tender, but others had the hysterical feeling of a bad biopic on some tormented classical musician.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

The eclectic, electro-centric midnight series at Club Soda has been full of surprises this year. Wednesday night, it surprised by not surprising. British duo **Swayzak** performed an unremarkable DJ set of minimal house and breaks that, while funky enough, went nowhere in particular. The crowd danced distractedly and stuck around, but there was no liftoff, only takeoff – as in, this reporter taking off to catch some much-needed Zs.

T'CHA DUNLEVY

When you have a voice as stirring as **Kurt Elling's,** you should just shush up and sing. Leave the shtick at the door and let your voice do the work for you. At the Elling **Sophie Milman** double bill at Théâtre Maisonneuve, Elling's flowery, frou frou banter between songs gave the evening a cheesy flavour and distracted from his delicious voice.

NATASHA AIMÉE HALL

Milman must have gone to the same school of shtick as Elling. When the 24-year-old sings the classics, she sounds like a magnificent torch singer from the 1940s. When she sings original material from her latest album, Make Someone Happy, she sounds like a marginal 40-year-old has-been.

NATASHA AIMÉE HALL

Continuing

Whether you're interested in the tips of the trade or the inner workings of a musician's mind, the places to get up close and personal are the hour-long meetings and ateliers being presented at the Hyatt Regency by the Montreal Musician and Musical Instrument Show (including 100 free activities).

Today at 1 p.m., saxophone star **Branford Marsalis** holds sway, followed by guitarist **Wayne Krantz** at 2:30, then an acoustic blues class by Offenbach veteran **John McGale** at 4:30.

Tomorrow, there's guitarists **Randy Bachman** at 1 p.m. and **Russell Malone** at 6. Sunday at 3 p.m., bassist **Alain Caron** will no doubt talk about his just-released duets album, Conversations. The launch takes place today at 5:30 p.m. at the same venue hosting all these meetings – Salon Jeanne Mance, off the main bar at the Hyatt. For more info: wwwmmmi.ca.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

REVIEWS

More sass than soul

ARTHUR KAPTAINIS
GAZETTE MUSIC CRITIC

Nice boa, nice body, nice stage banter, nice voice. Good show? Not bad. And that is as far as I go.

The star at Théâtre Maisonneuve last night was Molly Johnson, a Toronto diva with a strong Montreal following. She was making a case for a recent disc, Messin' Around, and making it well – even if messing around, musically, is not something Johnson does a great deal of.

Most of the songs were in sultry-nightclub mode, a style suited to a handsome voice with a fair quota of smoke and a touch of Billie Holiday citrus. Yet that sound seemed to confine the set more than define it. Given the omnivorous musicality of other vocalists at the festival, the continuum was noticeable, and possibly made worse by the very generous length of the concert.

None of this is to say that the Johnson product is any the less professional. She has a sassy stage manner, punctuated by plenty of jokes, and enough confidence to ad lib on an errant feather from the aforementioned fashioned accessory.

Her musicians did their jobs, although both the pianist and guitarist sounded like they had more music in them than was allowed to surface, and the Jacqueline-of-all-trades who played various wind instruments and supplied some vocals really should choose one vocation and run with it.

Much of the material was original to Johnson. Sunday got recognition applause. Springsteen's Streets of Philadelphia made a nice change of pace. The encores were demanded.

But while Johnson did what she did well enough, she was not the one thing a great jazz chanteuse must be – vulnerable. Can this art be learned, or is it innate?

Opening for Johnson was DK Bomeka, a high-energy Canadian soul singer with a dark voice and rugged style. Lennon-McCartney's Oh! Darling went well.

Original if nothing else

Guitarist Krantz begins 3-night stint

PETER HADEKEL
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

It's been raining guitars at this festival.

If a musical instrument show full of guitar-makers isn't enough, then add marquee players like John Scofield, John Abercrombie and Bill Frisell, as well as up-and-coming giant Lionel Loueke, who performs in a much anticipated free show tonight.

Claiming a part of the attention is Wayne Krantz, who is something of a cult guitar hero in New York music circles, where he holds down a regular Thursday night gig at 55 Bar.

Last night at the Club Savoy of the Metropolis, he began a three-night residence with a solo performance that marked him as an original, if nothing else.

Born in Oregon and trained at Boston's famed Berklee jazz school, Krantz has played behind everyone from Steely Dan to Michael Brecker to Billy Cobham.

For the first hour, he showed off a busy, polyphonic style that sounded like it was fuelled by caffeine. His playing was full of dirty, driving chords, slashing lines and the full complement of loops and tape delays, as he jammed with himself and sang some offbeat, original lyrics.

You wouldn't have called it jazz, but it certainly had an improviser's sensibility. Krantz was so spontaneous about his performance that it felt like you were in his living room listening to his practice.

The result was at times tedious, often fascinating and surprisingly orchestral in its total effect.

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